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... By ...
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(To be Continued.)
"Look here, my young spallie," said Connell gruffly, "Filipino or Spaniard, if you want to save your hide you'd better answer questions—and no lies, do you hear?"

At this threat a deep groan was heard to come from somewhere back in the recesses of the chancel. The men were startled. Involuntarily the boy cast a furtive glance in that direction. Connell noticed it and, leaving the boy with Bansemmer, hurried away and soon was looking down into the face of a prostrate man, young, but aged with emaciation.

"You must not touch him! Don't you see that he is dying?" cried the boy piteously in broken English. "He cannot fight you; he's dying," and then in a perfect frenzy of rage to Bansemmer, "Let me go—pig!"

Not until afterward did Bansemmer recall that in the general excitement it was the boy who dragged him along to the spot. And in spite of the solemnity of the scene there was something in his manner of delivering the insult that amused rather than angered the American.

"Plucky little devil!" he said half aloud.

Again the sick man groaned, tried to rise from the blankets and speak, but only to fall back moaning. Connell cautioned him against exertion and promised that no harm should come to either of them. While he reported the discovery to Captain Groce, he had the man carried to another part of the church and there made comfortable.

For the first time now Bansemmer began to notice the pain in his arm. Something angrily he turned to the boy: "Come! Give an account of yourself! How came you here?"

"Prisoners," was the sullen answer.

"Of the Filipinos?" Bansemmer asked in surprise.

"Yes."

"Then why did you try to kill me?"

"I hate you both! We Spaniards, have we not as much to fear from you?"

What difference does color make in bruises?"

"By the holy apostles! You're a gritty young 'un!" growled the returning sergeant. "Who's the other chap?"

"My brother—he's dying," said the boy, his voice softening. "Holy Virgin, save him! For weeks we've been in the hands of Aguinaldo's men. He's been so ill all the time. Have you a doctor?"

"A surgeon will probably be with us before long," was the sergeant's evasive reply.

Bansemmer looked searchingly at Connell. What he saw in the other's eyes caused him a sharp pang of grief. Both men turned their faces away for a moment, and it was with a gulp that Connell continued:

"Your brother will have the best of care if we get out of this mess. You are both safe. We are not fighting the Spaniards." And then pertinently, "So these were Aguinaldo's men?"

"Yes. He was here directing the fight," the boy answered.

"Aguinaldo here?" This and other ejaculations of surprise and anger

burst in chorus from every throat. But as suddenly they were followed by expressions of chagrin, for by contrasting the present situation with that which they had anticipated, this information had succeeded in intensifying their mortification.

But notwithstanding his share of the universal disappointment, a hasty reflection of preceding events convinced Graydon that personally he had little ground for complaint against the late occupants of the convent, for unintentional as undoubtedly had been the act through which at the very point of death his existence had been preserved, there was no evidence to refute the hypothesis that the shot which had killed his assailant in the plaza had been fired by one of the insurgents under cover.

"Great Scott!" was the exclamation to which he gave utterance. "Once more, I suppose, I owe my life to the blundering marksmanship of a Filipino!"

This half hearted acknowledgment of his strange indebtedness elicited from his companions no recognition other than a puzzled stare from the sergeant and an enigmatical smile on the face of the young Spaniard. Connell proceeded with his examination:

"Why did they leave you here?"

"They had no time to take us with them when you broke in," was the boy's answer. "Aguinaldo was on his way to some village where his family is in hiding. The scouts told him of your presence. Then he determined not to wait for Pilar, but to surprise you. We never rested day or night. My poor brother—how he suffered!"

"You won't mind if I call the sergeant, will you?" The girl nodded a slightly bewildered assent as Graydon

moved rapidly toward the others. Shortly he returned with the gallant Irishman.

"Senorita," began Connell, mopping his forehead and assuming his most polite manner, "you are perfectly safe with us, and as quickly as possible your brother and yourself shall be sent back to Manila. You are a brave slip of a girl, and we boys respect bravery in whatever dress—boy or girl!"

She looked at him in grateful surprise, and her lips trembled.

"But I am not your friend?"

"Possibly, senorita." He bowed low, with almost Chesterfieldian grace.

"But we are your friends."

Outside once more the Mausers were rattling, and Connell, with a word of parting, hastily took his leave. Graydon, on the point of returning to his post, was prevented by the girl.

"You were gentle with me even when I tried to—Don't risk your life there. Shoot from that narrow gate," pointing aloft. "It's not so exposed."

Bansemmer dragged an altar chair up to the grated window and perched

himself upon it. The girl sat below him, holding her brother's head in her lap. He was groaning and crying out to the soldiers to kill him rather than permit him to fall into the hands of the natives again.

Suddenly there was a great commotion and crashing of timbers in the front part of the church, followed by shouts and the rushing of feet. Graydon dropped from his perch and ran forth into the chancel. As he did so the banging of rifles close at hand deafened him. In an instant he saw what had happened. The Filipinos had charged the door and had forced it. They were crowding their way into the church in the face of the deadly Krag-Jorgensen. The chapel was lighted, but not from the inside. Cunning insurgents in the shelter of the walls were holding great torches just outside of the windows. Graydon could see his comrades firing at the door from behind every conceivable barrier. Without hesitation he dashed down the aisle and into the thick of the fray near the door.

The struggle was brief but fierce. The merciless fire of many Mausers on the outside opened a way through the small band of defenders, and the rush of the besiegers was successful. Through the door and windows they came, swarming like bees. Many of them fell to rise no more, but their comrades took an eye for an eye. Once confident soldiers toppled over dead until but few were left. Bansemmer led them in a quick dash for the chancel, hoping that the enemy would not dare attack a place so sacred.

Captain Groce and other officers had fallen. Connell became the leader of the remnant. Bansemmer stood squarely in front of the altar and blazed away at the horde of Filipinos as they advanced. They shot at him wildly and without effect. Bullets crashed into the altar decorations behind him. He stood there as one protected by God, unharmed in the shelter of the cross.

Behind him his comrades cowered and cursed in their dread of certain death. He heard the shrill cries of the girl urging him to protect her brother. She was calling upon God and the Holy Virgin to aid and shield him. And he stood there with a crazy joy in his heart, savagely pulling the trigger of the Krag-Jorgensen. Finally the hammer snapped with no report. As he turned back in consternation a small figure leaped to his side with a fresh weapon.

He shouted a word of warning to her and wheeled again to confront the foe. Even as he raised the gun a great shout arose above the noise of conflict. There was a mighty rush, a new banging of guns, a sudden stampede, and the chapel was filled with men in khaki!

CHAPTER XXIII.

REAT was the disappointment of Major March and his men when they found that neither Aguinaldo nor Pilar had fallen into their hands. Although they had come just in time to prevent the complete annihilation of the little company, the leaders had escaped with the remnant of their surprised forces. Scores of Filipinos were captured, dozens were killed and wounded. Eight of the dashing scouts who went out with Jerry Connell gave up their lives in exchange for the final victory.

A small guard was left at the convent to care for the wounded, the bulk of the command hurrying off at dawn to search for the routed Filipinos. Graydon Bansemmer was put in charge

(Continued on Page 9.)

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